



Miles Halpine

President, College Democrats of Connecticut

In favor: H.B. No. 5376

An Act Concerning Affirmative Consent

Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee:

Honorable Chairs Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Willis, Vice Chairs Senator Flexer and Representative Lopes, Ranking Members Senator Witkos, Representative Betts, Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, I am here today to testify in favor of House Bill 5376, An Act Concerning Affirmative Consent.

I am a senior political science major at the University of Connecticut and also serve as president for the College Democrats of Connecticut. As a college student raised in this state I am proud to call home, the issue of affirmative consent could not be of greater importance. We must help victims when they need it most and this bill would do just that. According to the National Criminal Justice Reference Service, one in five women and one in sixteen men are sexually assaulted while in college. The General Assembly took necessary steps on the issue of sexual assault two years ago and this measure will make it even clearer that only “yes” means “yes.”

Last session, there was a little confusion about what exactly the legislation entails. So far, California and New York have affirmative consent as a policy for colleges. As defined by the State University of New York system: “Affirmative consent is a knowing, voluntary, and mutual decision among all participants to engage in sexual activity. Consent can be given by words or actions, as long as those words or actions create clear permission regarding willingness to engage in the sexual activity. Silence or lack of resistance, in and of itself, does not demonstrate consent. The definition of consent does not vary based upon a participant's sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.”

A friend and colleague of mine who is Chief of Staff for the SUNY Student Assembly said the policy was implemented on all 64 campuses and is having a positive impact since it “helps to avoid any misconception around consent.” While I lead a partisan organization, we are strongly supporting this legislation because it will benefit all students and make campuses across Connecticut safer. You, as lawmakers, have the opportunity to help innocent victims at colleges.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this legislation. House Bill 5376 is incredibly important. The affirmative consent policy is already in place at a few institutions. However, you can ensure it becomes law on all campuses in our state and I implore you to do so.

Sincerely,

Miles Halpine